

Abbreviated Articles

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Police Begin Arresting Protest Organizers in Canada

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The police have begun moving in to make some arrests in downtown Ottawa, hoping to end weeks of gridlock in Canada's capital from demonstrations sparked by vaccination requirements and other grievances.

Among those arrested Thursday night was Tamara Lich, 47, one of the protests' main organizers, according to Dagny Pawlak, a spokeswoman for the protest.

Ms. Pawlak called the arrest "absolutely baseless and a disgrace to any liberal democracy, although not a surprise."

Ms. Lich has emerged as the public face and the most visible leader of the trucker convoy against pandemic restrictions. She is a former fitness instructor, who has worked in the energy sector and sung

and played guitar in a band called “Blind Monday” in Medicine Hat, Alberta. She was also a senior member of a splinter party that advocated for Canada’s Western provinces to secede from the country.

Throughout the protests, Ms. Lich, who speaks publicly in measured tones, has become adept at deploying social media — and her Twitter feed — to amplify the protesters’ grievances.

The police also arrested another organizer, Chris Barber, on Thursday afternoon, a spokesman for the protest confirmed.

Officials had been signaling for days that what had been criticized as a sluggish law enforcement response would soon be ending, and on Thursday, city, provincial and national police mobilized around Ottawa in preparation for a clampdown. Officers were seen gathering at a convention center near the airport and at major hotels on the city’s perimeter.

“The action is imminent,” Steve Bell, interim chief of the Ottawa Police Service, said Thursday afternoon, adding that the police were committed to ending the “unlawful occupation.”

The police created a perimeter with about 100 checkpoints in Ottawa’s downtown core on Thursday, to keep anyone but residents from entering, and declared the downtown a secure zone closed to outsiders.

Officials also closed all exits leading to the city center on the Trans-Canada Highway, which is Ottawa’s crosstown expressway. By Thursday evening, there was widespread gridlock through several neighborhoods in the inner parts of the city.

On Parliament Hill, the sleeting rain that had drenched Ottawa much of the day turned to snow, and defiant protesters remained in the streets, some of them dancing. One group of demonstrators followed a news camera crew, yelling, “Are you proud of what you’re doing?”

Just after 8 p.m., a yellow Volvo semi-truck voluntarily departed from Confederation Square — which surrounds the National War Memorial — after the police approached the driver. As the trucker opened his door for the last time before leaving, protesters shouted messages of gratitude to him while scolding the police.

The demonstrators said they had received text message alerts with the location of the police who were confronting the driver to try to intercede. It was the second truck in the area to leave Thursday.

The police issued increasingly urgent warnings on Wednesday and through the day Thursday — posted online, on social media and in printed leaflets distributed by hand to the protesters — stating that the blockade of streets was illegal. They threatened the protesters with arrest, seizure of their vehicles and other penalties.

In a sign of intensifying frustration over the protests, on Thursday the scope of a class-action lawsuit against the protesters was expanded to include more workers and businesses whose livelihoods have been upended by the protests. In total, the lawsuit is seeking about 306 million Canadian dollars in compensation for lost income.

In recent weeks, truckers and their supporters blocked key border crossings and other routes, impeding commerce and idling automakers’ plants. Some blockaded streets and harassed residents in Ottawa, creating a round-the-clock cacophony in quiet residential neighborhoods. While many of the demonstrators are from fringe groups, others are people who are fed up with pandemic restrictions. Physical violence has been rare.

Ottawa residents and many Canadians have grown impatient with the sluggishness of the police response, and early this week Ottawa’s police chief resigned amid criticism of law enforcement.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took the rare step this week of declaring a national public order emergency — the first such declaration in half a century — to end the protests. The move extended more robust policing measures across the country, and took aim at both protesters' fund-raising, which has been deemed a criminal activity, and the demonstrators' personal and business bank accounts.

Addressing the House of Commons on Thursday, Mr. Trudeau called for the protesters to go home. "It is high time that these illegal and dangerous activities stop, including here in Ottawa," he said.

Canadian Police Begin Freedom Convoy Arrests

Wall Street Journal, Kim Mackrael and Paul Vieira, 18 February 2022

Police began arrests of people protesting against Covid-19 mandates on Thursday evening, including two organizers, after promising imminent action to remove a weekslong encampment from the streets of Canada's capital city.

The arrests came after multiple warnings from police to those involved in the blockade—known as the Freedom Convoy and now in its third week—that they would face severe penalties if they didn't leave the area voluntarily. Two of the protest group's organizers, Chris Barber and Tamara Lich, were among those arrested on Thursday evening.

A lawyer for the group, Keith Wilson, said Mr. Barber was arrested on allegations that included counseling to commit mischief and obstruction of justice. Ms. Lich was charged with counseling mischief, he added.

Mr. Barber and Ms. Lich were two of the high-profile public faces of the protest group. They often posted video messages on social media, urging protesters in Ottawa to keep their resolve.

Ottawa police declined to comment on the arrests of Mr. Barber and Ms. Lich. A representative said it did not have a number for total arrests on Thursday related to the protest.

On Thursday evening, after the arrests began, hundreds of protesters remained in the encampment area. Some people waved Canadian flags attached to hockey sticks, while others dropped by food tents, where people were cooking meals of chicken and rice and grilling hamburger patties. One group built a snowman.

Police on Thursday also set up almost 100 checkpoints in downtown Ottawa with the goal of preventing people from entering the city's core to join the encampment and continued handing out fliers to protesters warning them to leave the area and that further action was imminent. They also installed additional fencing near Parliament Hill and concrete barriers in some areas of the city and blocked off exits from the main highway into downtown.

The three-week blockade had fueled further frustration for Ottawa residents who are fed up with the noise and clogged traffic downtown. The blockade has disrupted daily life and prevented many people from accomplishing basic tasks like grocery shopping.

"People feel more trapped than they ever have," Catherine McKenney, an Ottawa City Council member who represents an area of the city's downtown, said late Wednesday.

"I can tell you it will be a very different picture in the downtown core this weekend than it has been in the previous three weekends," Steve Bell, the city's interim police chief, told a news conference Thursday.

He said people involved in the protest were free to leave at any time.

The increased police presence is meant to signal that "we are at the end of this protest," Chief Bell said. "We will take what action we need to deliberately, safely, lawfully end these demonstrations."

Many of the officers arrived on city buses and wore bright yellow vests on top of their uniforms. In a change of tactics from previous weeks, police walked directly through the encampment in groups of about

a dozen. Some protesters offered the police a peace sign as they walked by, while others yelled "Freedom."

"You will face severe penalties under provincial and federal legislation if you do not cease further unlawful activity and remove your vehicle and/or property immediately from all unlawful protest sites," the notice handed out Thursday said.

Stephen Pender-Ness, a protester, said earlier Thursday he had no immediate plans to leave. He added he has been parked on the street in front of Parliament Hill since the beginning of the demonstration. The suburban Toronto trucker has a red rig, with a sign saying, "F— Trudeau," and wore a black knitted toque with the word "freedom." He said he doesn't see how police can arrest him for participating in what he said was a peaceful protest. "If they start pointing guns at me, then I will probably leave. But until that point, I am not going anywhere," he said.

Also Thursday, lawmakers began debating the government's controversial decision to invoke emergency powers allowing authorities to designate certain areas—including the streets around Parliament Hill—as no-protest zones where people could be subject to arrest.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the emergency powers—which at least two civil-liberties groups intend to challenge in court—represent a proportional response to blockades that have stymied the capital and disrupted cross-border trade.

The emergency powers are already in effect. However, lawmakers must vote on their continued use shortly after the government's decision to invoke them. Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the left-leaning New Democratic Party, signaled earlier that he was likely to support the move, which would give Mr. Trudeau's Liberals enough votes to ensure passage. Singh added in debate on Thursday that he would withdraw his support "if, at any point, we feel these powers are being misused."

The House of Commons will continue to debate the emergency measures on Friday and over the weekend, with a vote expected on Monday night.

The powers also allow authorities to compel essential-services providers, such as tow-truck drivers, to help with the removal of protesters' vehicles, which continue to clog the streets of downtown Ottawa.

Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said Thursday that bank accounts belonging to people involved with the protests were being frozen. She declined to say how many accounts were affected so far, citing concern that doing so could interfere with a continuing operation. "Action is being taken...and that action is going to increase in the coming days," she said.

American truckers plan convoy to DC in protest of COVID-19 mandates

Fox News, Louis Casiano, 17 February 2022

Taking a cue from truckers bordering America's north, a political action committee will partner with truck convoys to protest what it deems as overreaching government COVID-19 restrictions and mandates.

The Great American Patriot Project on Wednesday asked volunteers to contribute, join or support a convoy of truckers slated to travel to Washington D.C. next month.

Routes for the convoys will start in Cleveland, Columbus, Ohio and Fresno, California and will end on March 6 in Washington. They will be met by a congressional welcome committee to discuss policy changes, organizers said.

"I don't think that anybody wants to be told what to do," Erica Knight, spokeswoman for the PAC, told Fox News. "They don't want to deal with these mandates and it's kind of a way to stand up for all the American people against it."

In an email blast, the PAC said the truckers represent "peaceful, non-violent Americans who are dissatisfied with the unscientific, unconstitutional government overreach in regards to mandates."

The convoy comes amid ongoing protests by Canadian truckers calling for an end to COVID-19 mandates in their country. The resistance began several weeks ago when truckers decided to stand and oppose a rule requiring them to be fully vaccinated.

Not being vaccinated could impact their livelihoods as well as the country's supply chain.

On Monday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked that country's Emergencies Act, a rare move that gives the country's government temporary powers to deal with the border blockades, including using tough legal and financial measures against participating truckers.

"I'm sure that having a bunch of protesting and standing up for their rights are definitely part of the inspiration here," Knight said.

Canada's trucker blockade demands American attention

Seattle Times, Jon Talton, 18 February 2022

I didn't see this coming. This being the trucker blockade and unrest in Canada, our seemingly placid and liberal neighbor to the north.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers this week to stop protests that have paralyzed much of the economy. The damage extended to the auto industry in the United States, too, with the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit. Ottawa, the capital, has been besieged by protests and Parliament Hill blocked by big rigs.

"These blockades are illegal, and if you are still participating, the time to go home is now," Trudeau said.

So far, this hasn't stopped truckers and others from closing border crossings, including in Alberta and Manitoba. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police cleared protesters from the border with Washington but more are expected.

At a blockade in Alberta, the Mounties seized 13 long guns, handguns, body armor, large quantities of ammunition, high-capacity magazines and other weapons.

The grievance: Demonstrators are opposed to pandemic restrictions.

We're all stir crazy, which makes the phased return to the office by Microsoft and Expedia so hopeful. But this level of fanaticism seems...Trumpian.

Indeed, protesters in Ottawa reportedly carried "fake news," "the Great Resist" and "Covid red pill" signs. A speaker yelled that masks and vaccine mandates were interfering with "freedom."

In the United States, the former president and his supporters have opposed masks, vaccines (although Trump received a booster and was booed by his cult when they learned of it) and other measures to combat COVID-19. Sometimes the opposition has reached violent levels, on airliners and in restaurants.

Sure enough, Trump called Trudeau a "far-left lunatic" and lashed out at Big Tech for shutting down funding requests to support the so-called Freedom Convoy up north. GoFundMe had raised millions for the protesters.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a Trump ally, praised them too, saying, "Canadian truckers are heroes, they are patriots, and they are marching for your freedom and for my freedom. They are...defending Canada, but they're defending America as well. That is courage on display — that the government doesn't have the right to force you to comply to their arbitrary mandates"

It's a contrast to the racial justice protests after the murder of George Floyd. Trump called those overwhelmingly peaceful protesters "terrorists," "rioters, looters and anarchists," "arsonists" and "violent mobs."

Evidence continues to emerge that the movement has enjoyed the help of far-right elements in the United States, along with supportive coverage from Fox News' Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity. Logos of QAnon, the U.S. conspiracy movement, are on big rigs snarling Ottawa. Protesters carried a few Trump banners and Confederate flags. Some wore MAGA caps.

But this is mainly a Canadian-led effort.

The New York Times reported that from hotels near the Ottawa protests, "a team of self-appointed leaders, some with military and right-wing organizing backgrounds, have orchestrated a disciplined and highly coordinated occupation." Other leaders have law-enforcement experience.

Marco Mendicino, the public safety minister, said Tuesday, "What is driving this movement is a very small, organized group that is driven by an ideology to overthrow the government. Through whatever means they may wish to use."

It's a small group — a few thousand — and 90% of Canadian truck drivers are vaccinated. But this rogue cohort has inflicted serious economic damage and added to strain on supply chains.

NAFTA — or Trump's USMCA, if you must — depends on billions of dollars of trade flowing between the borders of Canada, the United States and Mexico. The Ambassador Bridge alone carries goods worth \$300 million a day.

Washington state sent \$7.7 billion in merchandise trade to Canada this past year and received \$18.7 billion in imports. A good part is carried by trucks.

No wonder the Teamsters, which represents many truckers in both countries, has denounced the blockades.

But this can be healed quickly once the big rigs move and goods flow again (they also move, unimpeded so far, by rail. The Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railroads operate in both Canada and the United States, including a CP tunnel between Windsor and Detroit).

The damage to democracy is more difficult to calculate but ominous.

We might have seen it coming with the election of the late Rob Ford as mayor of Toronto, Canada's largest city, in 2010 (his brother Doug Ford is premier of Ontario). Rob Ford was a right-wing populist who won thanks to resentment of Toronto's suburbs against the liberal city "elites" (Toronto has an amalgamated government that includes its suburbs).

He opposed naming a street for Nelson Mandela, fought labor unions and proposed subways rather than light rail, proclaiming "the war on the car is over." He labeled Toronto's bag fee as "fascism."

He bickered with the city council, which eventually voted to strip him of many of his powers because of scandals, conflicts of interest and substance abuse.

Rob Ford seemed like an outlier. Maybe he was a forerunner.

Now 32% of Canadians polled express sympathy for the protesters.

David Frum wrote in the Atlantic, "Maybe this latest form of performative intimidation is only being road tested in Ottawa. It could be coming to American cities soon."

Given American polarization and propensity for violence — and political violence with the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol — it's an unsettling prospect.

The Giddy, Terrifying Siege of Ottawa

New York Times, Michelle Goldberg, 17 February 2022

When I asked Matthew Wall, a 36-year-old electrician from Manitoba, what brought him to this city, which has been overwhelmed by a giant protest encampment, he answered with one word: “Mushrooms.” Searching for his purpose in life, he said, he went on a psychedelic spiritual journey and had an image of the Freedom Convoy, a demonstration against Covid rules that has converged on the Canadian capital with trucks and other large vehicles.

“I’m here for the rights of our kids, for parents’ rights, for everyone’s rights,” said Wall. “So kids can live in a future where they don’t have to have something covering their face, lose emotion. You don’t have the human connection, don’t see them smile anymore. It’s dehumanizing.” His daughters, he told me, were seeing a school therapist weekly because of the emotional fallout of the pandemic. “You’re taking away the love!” he said.

Wall was sitting in the passenger seat of a black truck owned by a friend he’d made in Ottawa. It was covered in painted slogans, some with imperfect punctuation: “Dad’s On a Mission,” “Bless You in Advance Boys in Blue,” “Superhero’s Never Die.” Notes of thanks were taped to the truck, as were tickets that had been issued to protesters, including one to Wall for “bass noise (or unusual noise or noise that disturbs inhabitant(s) of the city),” which came with a fine of 1,000 Canadian dollars.

In the back seat was Jenna Wozney, a 24-year-old actress from Vancouver who’d flown to Ottawa on her own a few days earlier. She said some of her family and friends considered the protests “hateful,” but she’d been determined to see them for herself. Wozney deeply distrusted the vaccines, though she’d given in and gotten the shots in order to be able to work: “I’m so poor, I didn’t have any money, I had to get it,” she said, adding an expletive.

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The demonstrations felt, to her, transformative. She saw them, somehow, as the next step after Black Lives Matter and Canada’s Every Child Matters movement, which is devoted to Indigenous survivors of abusive residential schools. “I feel like this is the final thing,” she said.

“This is an awakening,” added Wall.

The day before, Wozney had broken up with her live-in boyfriend, who didn’t support her traveling to Ottawa, and canceled her ticket home. She wasn’t sure where she was sleeping that night but said several people had offered her a place to stay. At one point, speaking about the harms that she believes, falsely, are coming to children as a result of the coronavirus vaccine, she exclaimed, “I’ll die here!”

“I will, too,” said Wall.

As I left, they insisted I take some of the fudge a stranger had given them.

The takeover of downtown Ottawa, whose streets are clogged by trucks, trailers and cars, is now approaching its fourth week. Populists and reactionaries worldwide, including Donald Trump and Tucker Carlson, have been thrilled by what’s happening here. A relatively small number of people — around 8,000 at the height of the protests, and on most days fewer — have snarled the capital of a major Western country and thrown its left-leaning government into chaos, demanding freedom from Covid-related public health measures. Related encampments on some of the bridges linking Canada to the United States affected hundreds of millions of dollars in trade a day before they were dispersed.

There is a debate in Canada about whether Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was justified on Monday in invoking the Emergencies Act, a 1988 law which gives the government the power to override certain civil liberties. But the fact that he resorted to the law — which has never before been used — shows the extent to which the protests are making the capital ungovernable. The tactic of using large vehicles to occupy a big city has inspired similar protests in countries including France, Israel and New Zealand. Trump supporters are planning American versions of the convoys next month. If they succeed in

entrenching themselves somewhere, it could be terrifying, not least because unlike the Canadians, they'll probably be heavily armed.

The thrust of the Ottawa protests is clearly reactionary, but there were plenty of people on the streets who seemed genuinely baffled by the media's description of them as part of a far-right movement. They'd been infuriated and in some cases unmoored by Canada's pandemic restrictions, which have been stricter than America's. (As The National Post reported, during the Omicron wave, the provinces of Quebec and Ontario "closed schools and imposed blanket bans on indoor dining, gyms and bars," and Quebec enacted a 10 p.m. curfew.)

Most people I met said they'd never been to a protest before. Their willingness to not just go to Ottawa, but in many cases to stay there in the freezing cold for weeks on end, is a sign of how profoundly the pandemic has eroded trust in the authorities. Two years of Covid has created a climate of suspicion, confusion and grief that the far right has been able to exploit.

By the time I arrived at the beginning of the week, the occupation had shrunk, but the main encampment still spread out several blocks on either side of Ottawa's Parliament Hill as well down a number of other downtown streets, including some residential blocks. There were more food tents and barbecues than I could count. On Kent Street, people were roasting a whole pig, one of two they said had been donated. Others played hockey on the block between the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice. Someone had brought a hot tub. At times there were bouncy castles for the kids who were visiting, as well as those camped out with their parents. Imagine Occupy Wall Street, but set up by construction workers and military veterans with logistics training.

I didn't see any Confederate or Nazi flags, though there had been some early on. I saw one Gadsden flag, and a guy in a MAGA hat who'd taped over the word "America" and written "Canada" on it. I saw lots of anti-vax paranoia, but few efforts to own the libs. The one word that was repeated over and over again — on signs, in chants and in conversation — was "freedom." Many who'd found the pandemic intolerably alienating were reveling in human connection. Several people hugged me after I interviewed them, even though I told them I was from the hated mainstream media.

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Imad Arraj, who installs HVAC systems and helps his wife run an Ottawa hunting and fishing shop, was at the protest on Tuesday night with a cousin. "It did a lot of damage," he said of pandemic restrictions. "Me myself, I'm sitting home, I'm just feeling so down because all these friendships that you used to have, get together for a card game or whatever, it's no longer there. We disconnected from each other." He spoke bitterly of the 10-person limit on indoor gatherings in Ontario over the winter holidays. "We used to have a lot of people at our house — my brothers, my sisters, my mom come to visit," he said sadly.

Before the Freedom Convoy came to Ottawa, Arraj said, he'd never taken part in a demonstration. "I was in depression, sitting at home. I thought I was alone. I thought I was going crazy. I thought I was the only person thinking that way," he said. "And when this happened, I came down to see." What he saw uplifted him. "The love that you'll receive here, you are never, ever going to see it anywhere else," he said.

For many other Ottawans, though, the protests have been a siege, not a love fest. Locals described the incessant blaring of horns — which have ebbed, but not stopped, after an injunction — as a form of psychological torture. An Asian-inspired ice-cream shop closed for several days after a member of its staff who was walking to work was confronted by two men and shoved to the ground for wearing a mask. "Based on the accounts we've heard from our neighbors, this behavior is not an isolated incident," said a statement on the shop's Instagram feed.

Not everyone at the protests comes from the far right, but the organizers do. Among them are Tamara Lich, formerly a leading figure in the fringe Maverick Party, which promotes the secession of three of Canada's Western provinces, and Patrick King, a "great replacement" conspiracy theorist who has railed against a plot to use refugees "to depopulate the Anglo-Saxon race because they are the ones with the strongest bloodlines."

The crowds themselves contain a number of extremists. At an encampment on the border crossing in Coutts, Alberta, four people were arrested and charged with conspiracy to murder police officers. Two of them reportedly had ties to a white-nationalist network called Diagonline, whose founder, Jeremy MacKenzie, has been part of the Ottawa demonstrations.

"One of the dynamics here is there are multiple faces to this occupation," said Jeff Leiper, a member of the Ottawa City Council. "On weekends, there's a party happening in occupied downtown — you've seen the stage, you've seen the bouncy castles, you've seen the hot tubs, you've seen the D.J.s. And that is one face of it." But the other face has been more sinister.

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Throughout the protests, men in black pickup trucks flying Canadian flags have menaced people in residential neighborhoods. "Frequently, over and over again, we get the reports from residents that the trucks are slowing down, they're accosting residents on the street for wearing masks, and frequently they're accompanying that with some sort of misogynist, homophobic or racist slur," said Leiper.

Near the encampments, the restaurants and stores on some shopping streets, as well as the Rideau mall, have been shut for weeks, after being flooded with defiantly unmasked visitors when the convoys first arrived. Those who were horrified by the invasion of their city kept wondering: Where were the police? On Wednesday, cops handed out fliers warning protesters that they were subject to arrest. Under the Emergencies Act, the flier said, "anyone coming to Ottawa for the purpose of joining the ongoing demonstration is breaking the law." But until Thursday, when the police started making arrests, their presence was minimal, and people continued to bring wagons full of fuel containers into the encampment to keep their engines running.

Once the protesters had lodged their vehicles in the city, there was no straightforward way to get them out. Some towing companies refused to cooperate with the police, but even if they were willing to help clear the roads, it was hard to see how they could remove the vehicles — some with their wheels taken off — without being swarmed. Arresting the demonstrators first, however, would be a struggle, because they could hide in their cars, trucks and trailers. The presence of children complicated matters further.

"I don't think any of us have accepted at this point it's inevitable that this will end in a firefight," Leiper said on Wednesday. But, he added, "we're all worried about it." The day before, Ottawa's police chief had resigned over his handling of the crisis.

Back at the occupation, I met Dana Wilson, who told me he was raised in Mississippi and had served in the U.S. military in Central America before moving to Canada in 1987. He gestured to a cluster of men nearby and said they were veterans as well, and that he was part of a group led by a retired colonel. "From a military man's perspective, you want to talk jargon, this is the last hill," he said, describing Trudeau as "a narcissistic globalist sociopath" who has used "medical tyranny" to control the population, all for profit.

I asked him what he thought would happen when the police moved in. "We've got some things that we're not prepared to talk about," he said slyly. "We've got an arsenal too. People power, darling." When I pressed, he said that the arsenal was metaphorical. He called the encampment "the Canadian Alamo," but then said that was a metaphor, too. At one point he said he didn't believe there would be a police confrontation because Canadians wouldn't stand for it; like others at the Freedom Convoy, he was convinced that the population is on his side, which polls show is very much not the case. (In one survey, 65 percent of respondents called the convey "a small minority of Canadians" who were behaving "selfishly.")

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But he also seemed prepared for violence. Of the police, he said, "I hope they don't start shooting people like they did at Kent State, but you know what, the world's got to see."

However the protests resolve, Elizabeth Simons, deputy director of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, an organization akin to the Southern Poverty Law Center, expects the far-right forces behind them to be emboldened. “It’s a populist movement,” she said. “We have people who feel that they are the pure public fighting for the rights of the people versus the corrupt elite, which is government, media. That’s going to resonate with a lot of people when we’re two years into a pandemic where there is legitimate grievance and criticism” of how the authorities have handled things.

Nobody, she said, “has come out of the last two years unscathed. Everyone’s affected in some way. It’s just which direction do they choose to go.” And how far.

MyPillow’s CEO is coming to save Canada’s truckers. With pillows, of course.

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 17 February 2022

MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell is determined to deliver more than 12,000 pillows to protesters who are entrenched in the semi-trucks that have overtaken downtown Ottawa.

The pillow magnate and top Trump ally says he wants to add a layer of comfort for those on the front lines of a movement pushing back against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

“He’s just a horrible, evil dictator,” Lindell said of Trudeau in an interview Thursday with POLITICO. “These truckers do this, and Trudeau reacts the way he is. The guy is a monster. He’s a monster, fact. A monster beyond anything in history.”

Lindell, a 2020 election conspiracy promoter, is one of many prominent U.S. figures on the right championing Canada’s “Freedom Convoy” protests, which have blockaded economically vital border crossings and engulfed the capital for the past 21 days.

The convoys have shaken Canadians’ confidence in their public institutions and led Trudeau to invoke never-before-used emergency powers to quell the protests. Marco Mendicino, Trudeau’s public safety minister, has warned that some members of the movement follow an extreme, far-right ideology with an objective of overthrowing the government.

An X-factor in the story could be the enthusiastic support, financial injections and widespread attention the convoy is drawing from the U.S. Americans have sent millions of dollars to help fund the Canadian movement, which has taken on a cross-border anti-government note.

And in the liberal Justin Trudeau, they’ve found a perfect punching bag.

Former President Donald Trump has boosted the convoy campaign against what he called the harsh Covid-19 policies of “far left lunatic Justin Trudeau.” This week, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who has publicly supported the movement, compared Trudeau to Adolf Hitler in a since-deleted tweet.

Other notable Americans who have backed the Canadian convoys include Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Donald Trump Jr. and Fox News host Tucker Carlson — who has used his platform to hammer Trudeau and promote the trucker protests.

Lindell is coming to the party late, but loud. He says he’s trying to offer his support for the movement by donating the pillows for the demonstrators and their children, who are encamped in Ottawa and facing what appears to be imminent eviction. The shipments include “Bible” pillows, which he said feature scenes such as Noah’s Ark.

“We just want to give them some comfort while they’re up there because everyone’s behind them,” Lindell said.

But the Minnesota business owner’s quest to get his pillows into Canada hit a snag a few days ago before he could truck them across the border.

Lindell says his company lacked the right permit to enter Canada, but he insists the paperwork issue was sorted out Thursday. The pillow delivery should arrive soon on trucks coming through upstate New York, he added.

At least one media report this week said that Lindell himself had been stopped at the frontier. He called the report a "lie."

Lindell then boasted that he misled a reporter Wednesday by telling him he planned to drop the pillows into Canada from a helicopter with little parachutes.

"I punked him," Lindell said, with a chuckle.

Lindell says he's disgusted by Trudeau's move this week to invoke the Emergencies Act to crack down on the protests.

The Act has immediately given authorities the ability to, for example, apply severe penalties for certain types of public assembly and to take stronger steps in an effort to cut off the movement's funding.

With their new powers in hand, police in the capital have warned protesters to leave or face arrest.

Officers have started to close in on protesters and the hundreds of trucks clogging the city's core. Early Thursday, police erected fences and barricades around key sites, including the public grounds around Parliament Hill.

"The action is imminent," Ottawa interim police chief Steve Bell told reporters Thursday. "We're sick of what's happening in our streets."

Bell, who took over the force's top job after Peter Sloly's resignation earlier this week, also said police have set up a perimeter with nearly 100 checkpoints to prevent others from joining the "unlawful" protest.

Trudeau and his government, Lindell insists, are trying to destroy the great country of Canada.

"You guys skipped right over socialism in Canada to communism," he said. "Hopefully, you're at a crossroad, and you can get your country back."